UPI Telephoto

LOUISE THORESEN
She was booked in Fresno

June 11, 70 Chron

Thoresen Is Shot Dead-- Wife Held

From Our Correspondent

Fresno

William Erness Thoresen, 32, the mysterious and tempestuous gun czar of Pacific Heights, died of gunshot wounds here yesterday.

Police booked his sharp-featured, dark blonde wife, Louise, 33, on suspicion of murder.

A matron at Fresno county jail said the willowy suspect was taken to a hospital before booking in late afternoon, but officials wouldn't say why.

Police Chief Henry R. Morton said Thoresen died of "several" pistol shots into his chest at about 8:14 a.m. during a domestic squabble in the second floor master bedroom of the nomadic couple's latest home here. A .38-caliber pistol was used, Morton said.

The shooting occured two days after a Federal appeals court ordered new hearings which could overturn the couple's conviction in April, 1969, on charges of illegal interstate gun shipments.

Thoresen's bizarre gun gathering hobby — he never explained it any other way —

See Back Page

From Page 1

came to light when officers raided his San Francisco mansion and several Bay Area storage centers and toted up 77 tons of arms and ammunition in April, 1967. Thoresen valued the collection at $500,000.

Mystery continued to shadow him, even in death. Investigating officers said yesterday his swank home here was "like a warehouse — unopened boxes and crates all over the place."

No immediate attempt was made to learn the contents.

In yet another turn of events, local police left the Thoresen home early last night carrying an estimated 15 kilos of marijuana and a small quantity of hashish which, they said, were found in several rooms inside.

Thoresen was the son of the president of Chicago-based Great Western Steel Company. He was a tall man, a natty dresser described by his wife in 1967 as "good looking, intelligent and well read."

He stammered, though, and his generally controlled composure was pocked with eruptions and with minor scrapes with police. He switched attorneys numerous times during his appeal on the gun shipment charge.

Federal. Judge William N. Goodwin, who handled the trial last year, observed that "Mr. Thoreson has a tendency to want to make his own rules."

WILLIAM E. THORESEN
Shooting victim

Mrs. Thoresen, a former speech therapist, filed for divorce on grounds of incompatibility last November when the couple lived at Phoenix.

But she followed him to Fresno, friends said, and "things seemingly couldn't have been better."

Neighbors described the Thoresens as "Quiet and friendly."

Police said Mrs. Thoresen ran across the street to a neighbor's home at about 8:30 yesterday and cried, "I shot Bill."

HOSPITAL

Officers said they found him naked on his bed. He was pronounced dead at St.

Agnes Hospital at 8:55 o'clock after resuscitation efforts failed.

The couple's 8-year-old son, Mike, was attending a nearby. public school when the shooting occurred. Neighbors gave him temporary shelter.

Attorney John H. Westover of Phoenix, who represented Thoresen on the arms shipment case appeal, said he advised him of the favorable turn of events Tuesday afternoon.

"He seemed pleased," Westover said. The attorney said he had had no indication from Thoresen that the couple had any new troubles.

RULING

The Ninth District Court of Appeals ruled Monday there is sufficient question about legality of search and seizure of Thoresen's property to warrant a new hearing on whether the evidence should be suppressed.

"The government's entire case would be in jeopardy," Justice Frederick G, Hamley wrote for the unanimous panel, if the initial seizure at issue is found illegal. That involves Thoresen's attache case in New York in January, 1967.

The other search and seizure at issue came in the followup raids in San Francisco.

Among the weaponry confiscated was a 25-mm wheel-mounted cannon, two 20-mm anti-craft guns, a 37-mm cannon, 17 machine guns, 30 tons of rifles, shotguns, hand guns, submachine guns, bzookas and flame-throwers; 667,778 rounds of ammunition and 1790 parachute flares. Federal officials have cached the arms and ammunition in military bunkers.

Thorese said durin his a gun collector since his youth. He was once a guest of the Green Berets at Fort Bragg, N.C., a fact which caused speculation he was collecting the arsenal for some military or paramilitary use.

Federal authorities said they could find no evidence that he was an agent of paramilitary groups, American security organizations or a foreign power.

Troresen said during his trial, held at Fresno because of publicity given his arrest in the Bay Area; that he had changed hobbies and was collecting model railroads.

Thoresen was sentenced to six months in jail and fined $4000. His wife was fined $4000 and placed on probation. All sentences were held in abeyance, though, during the lengthy appeal.

The couple retained their mansion at 2801 Broadway in SAN Francisco. They had tried to sell it at one time, but their agent, Fred Braun, said yesterday they had decided to sell it only if they could find another San Francisco home.